

PLAYBOY

ENTERTAINMENT FOR MEN

JANUARY 2001 • www.playboy.com

**HOLIDAY
ANNIVERSARY
ISSUE**

PLAYBOY INTERVIEWS
GARY JOHNSON

**THE MAVERICK
REPUBLICAN
GOVERNOR
WHO WANTS
TO LEGALIZE
DRUGS**

GOLDBERG
**THE UNLIKELY
WRESTLER
EXPLAINS HIMSELF**

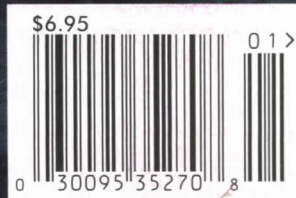
**PLAYMATE
REVIEW**

**Superjock
Gabrielle
Reece**
**Naturally
Nude**

**REGIS
PHILBIN**
**BY DAVID
HALBERSTAM**

**20Q WITH
CAROL ALT**

**ARTHUR C.
CLARKE**
**2001 AND
BEYOND!**



gabrielle reece

SHE'S BEAUTIFUL,

SHE'S BUFF

AND SHE'S BOLD

S

he may look like a sinewy import from Mount Olympus, but Gabrielle Reece is someone men can easily relate to. She can talk sports, swing a mean five-iron and do 500 pounds on the leg press. Her physical presence—6'3" and 160 pounds of curvy, gym-sculpted, cinnamon-hued muscle—inspires awe, respect and maybe a little fear.

But call her Gabby, please. Everyone does. You've seen her over the years, bashing a volleyball in ads for Nike and Coppertone, gazing from the covers of glossy magazines and tackling extreme sports on MTV (what she calls her "crash test dummy phase"). But you have never seen Gabby like this. At 30, she is in the best shape of her life: lean, strong, supremely self-possessed. "I feel I'm grown up enough to make the decision to do this," she says. "I feel comfortable with my body."

Photographer Phillip Dixon shot these soulful images in his home studio in Los Angeles and on Santa Cruz Island off California's central coast. He met Gabby when she was 18 and a rising star in both college volleyball and modeling. Dixon was preparing to shoot her for *Harper's*

Bazaar, and approached her while she was sitting in the makeup chair. "He looked in the mirror at me," Gabby recalls, "and he said, 'People are going to say a lot of things about you, about your size. You just have to know that you're as perfect as you can be the way you are.' And he walked away. I've always felt that Phillip got me. He celebrates my size and strength."

Gabby's conception of her body as a performance machine informs her attitude toward these photos. "I don't think of the images as sexual," she says. "Our goal was to shoot the body as a form. They're more of a statement that a woman can be really powerful, really feminine, really natural and really confident and just put it out there. No big deal. I'm not trying to say, Check me out."

Gabby is an athlete, but she doesn't play games. "I wasn't trying to create layers between myself and the pictures," she says. "The only things I had on were mascara and sunblock. In a sense, they're more me than any pictures I've ever taken."

Gabby was raised in Puerto Rico, St. Thomas and New York's Long Island, a skinny, insecure skyscraper

**PHOTOGRAPHY
BY PHILLIP DIXON**













of a girl “with no sense that my life would amount to anything,” she wrote in her 1997 autobiography, *Big Girl in the Middle*. Of course, she has amounted to a lot—her Renaissance woman résumé ranges from writer to professional athlete to TV personality—and she credits sports and fitness with giving her discipline and purpose. Gabby was a force in professional beach volleyball for almost a decade, but for the past nine months she has been training with Gravity Golf founder David Lee with the goal of turning pro.

When Gabby is not on the driving range she's at the gym, pushing iron for two hours, keeping herself in fighting trim. Even there she radiates intensity and power, qualities that, she admits, can be intimidating in a woman. “In my experience there have been men who have said, ‘I’m not even going to get near that!’” she says, laughing. “They’d say, ‘Well, if you were a bit shorter!’” She says her size has weeded out the weak—Gabby’s own variation on social Darwinism. “I’ve met some extraordinary men that way. Actually, short men are the ballsiest. They’ll be like, ‘Hey, I don’t care how big you are!’”









Jock gets in touch with nature on Santa Cruz Island

● **Playboy on Santa Cruz:** Readers of the January issue of Playboy will notice that superjock Gabrielle Reece used Santa Cruz Island as a nude romping place, sans volleyball outfit, sans everything except what nature provided her. Au natural in nature. In return, the non-profit Nature Conservancy, which owns 76 percent of the island (the National Park Service owns the rest) got a fee. Conservancy folks haven't confirmed how much, but said their normal photo shoot fee is about \$10,000. This, Conservancy spokeswoman Liz Riley told me, is "not an endorsement of Playboy."

A century ago, the island produced Santa Cruz Island label wine. I've seen the old vineyard. For 20 years, a Santa Ynez Valley vintner has wanted to plant grapes out there and sell wine to provide financial support for Conservancy operations. So far no go, but don't be surprised if the new Conservancy regime takes him up on it.

Barney Brantingham's column runs Thursdays through Sundays. You can reach Barney at 564-5105 or by e-mail at bbrantingham@newspress.com.

12/15/00